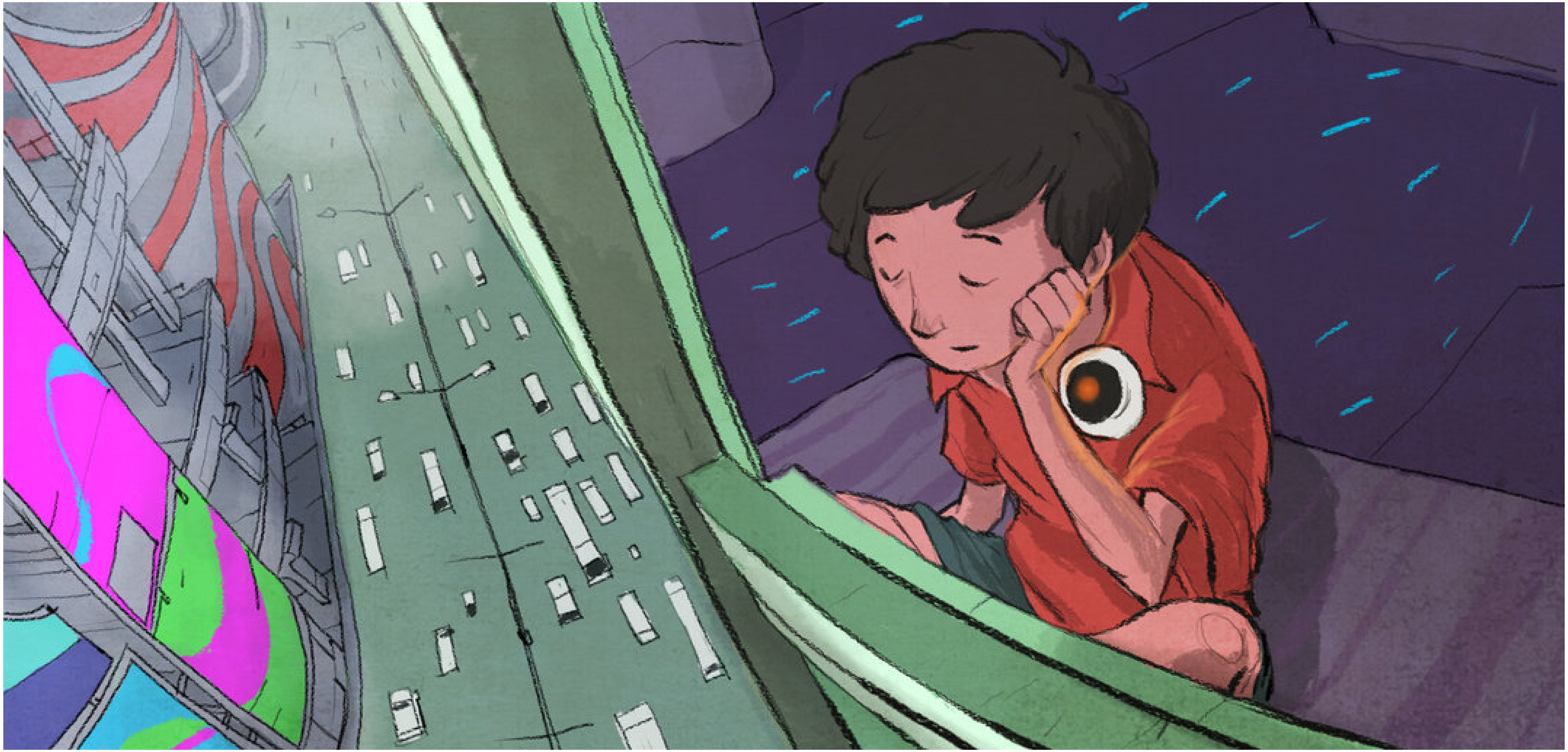


Manikantan Has Enough

Author: Anil Menon
Illustrator: Upamanyu Bhattacharyya

Level 4



Mani put his Schoolbag down on the Coffee Table and groaned. His shoulders hurt, but his head hurt even more. It had been a long day. The Amulet around his neck flashed once.

“Manikantan, put your Schoolbag where it belongs,” said the Coffee Table.

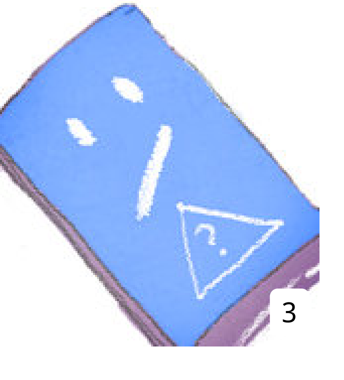
“Yes Manikantan,” agreed the Schoolbag, “I don’t belong here. I suggest you put me in your Room in a proper place.”

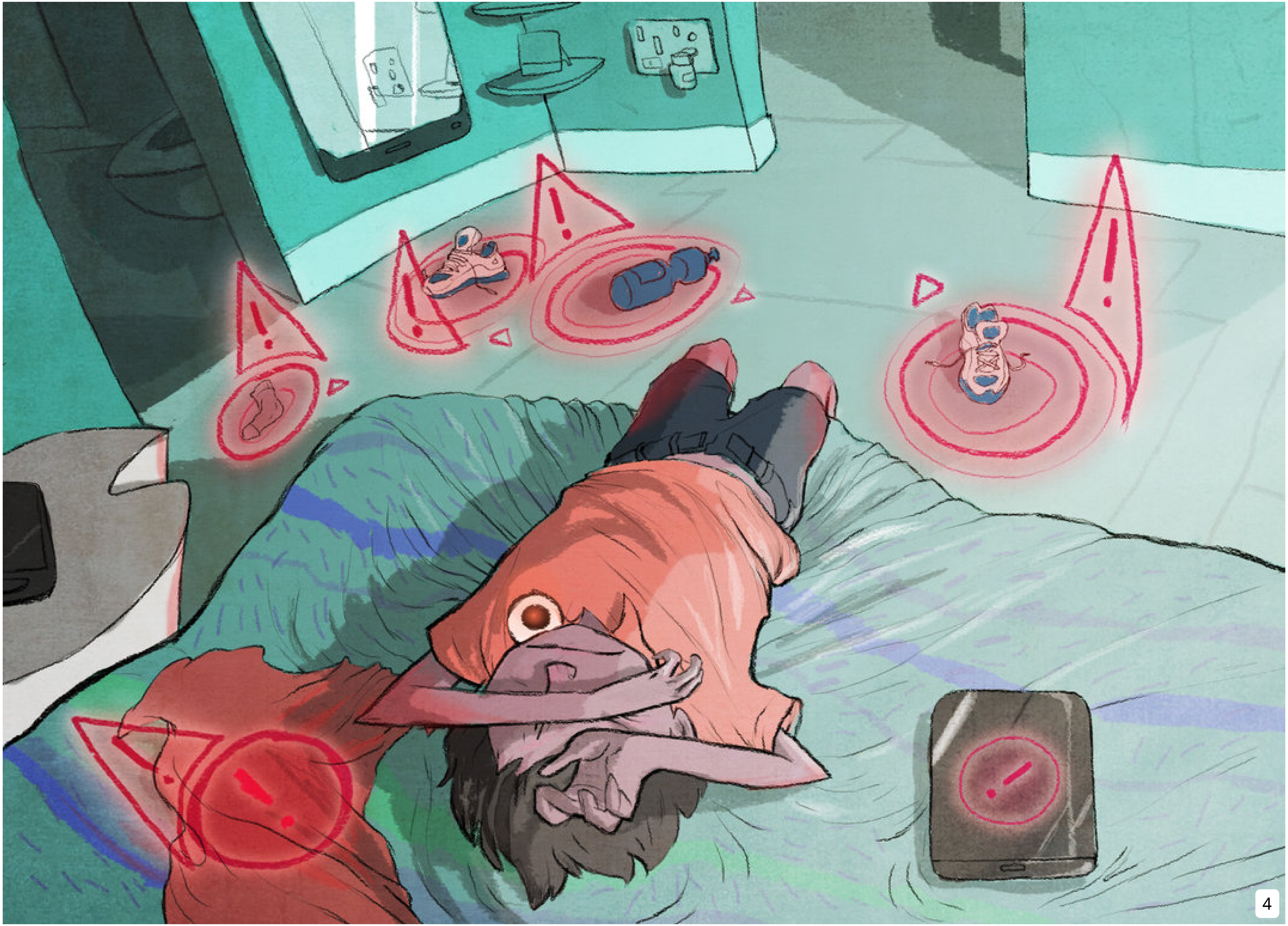
Mani knew better than to argue. He picked up the Schoolbag and trudged towards his Room. He put away his Schoolbag on the Desk, kicked off his Shoes, and then lay down on the Bed. He groaned.

“Are you not feeling well, Manikantan?” asked the Room.
“I’m fine. Leave me alone.”
Mani moved the Amulet to the back of his neck. He longed to throw it into the Trash. The objects in the House would still be able to spy on him but at least they wouldn’t be able to talk to him.

“You groaned twice.” The Room’s voice sounded muffled. “Do you have a headache, Manikantan?”
“Leave me alone.” Then after a pause, Mani added, “Yes.”

“Tsk, tsk. So sorry to hear that, Manikantan.” The Room sounded very sympathetic. “I have let your Amma know. Perhaps you are hungry. That may be why you’re having a headache. How about a nice hot cup of chai and some pakodas?"







Chai and pakodas *would* be nice, though Mani wished the Room hadn't told amma he had a headache. Now she would worry.
"Okay."

"Great. I have told the Kitchen. And Manikantan, put your Shoes in the ShoeRack."

"Yes," said the ShoeRack, "I have plenty of space. Waiting."

Mani knew he should get up, but he didn't feel like it. Maybe he should just sleep a little. He was so tired.

"Waiting," said the ShoeRack.

Mani closed his eyes and thought of Anandpuram. His Amma called it a village, but to Mani it was home.

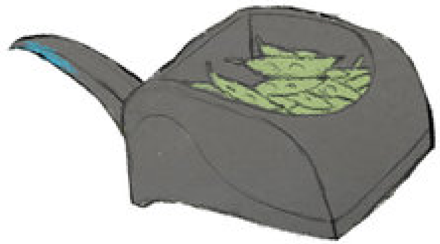


He recalled the graceful sway of the tall palm trees and the vast rose-blue sky. In the morning the gentle gusts of wind carried the wonderful smell of porottas cooking over charcoal fires. The winter months were the best. The cool air was nothing like the air-conditioned air in Smart City's buildings.



No, wait, the rainy season was the best! It was such fun to watch the fat heavy warm droplets splish-splosh into the river Periyar.

Oh, how he’d enjoyed sitting by the riverbank. So quiet, so peaceful. If only things could go back to the way they had been.



“Waiting,” said the ShoeRack.

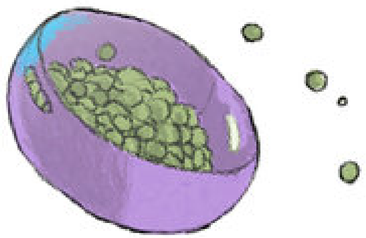
Mani sat up with a sigh. He didn’t mind being given helpful hints, but this was too much. It was almost like being a prisoner and nobody, not even Amma, understood. Mani placed the Shoes on the ShoeRack and headed for the Kitchen.

He had to warm the pakodas himself, but the FoodGenie brewed some chai. It tasted exactly like the kind of chai a machine would make.

“Is the chai to your satisfaction, Manikantan?” asked the FoodGenie.

“As good as cow urine.”

“Thank you.”







Mani’s Amulet beeped. It was his mother. She wanted to know whether he was feeling better.

“How is your headache, *kanna*?” Her loving voice made Mani feel very sorry for himself.

“The headache’s better, Amma. How’s work?”

“Wonderful. It’s not like my old Anandpuram job at all. How was your day, *kanna*?”

“Great.”

His Amma worked so hard, such long hours, worried so much about him, cared so much. She was his mother and father and all the family he had in the world. He just didn't have the heart to tell the truth.

"I had a great day."

"You sure, Mani? Your SchoolBag told me you were sent to the Principal. What was that about?"
"Nothing."

"Mani?"

"Nothing! You can ask the Schoolbag. It seems to know everything."

"Mani, what's the matter? Look, why don't you go to the Mirror? I want to see you. Whatever the problem is, we can solve it."



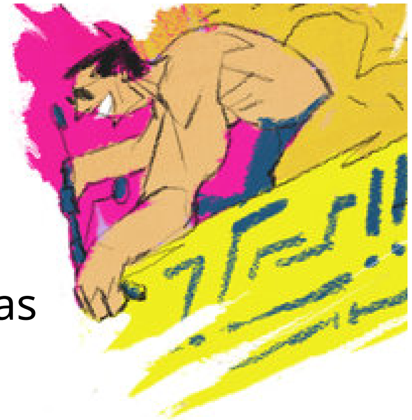
“No, we can’t solve it!” Mani felt tears beginning to form. He tried to press back the tears but they kept coming like the rain on Periyar.
He knew the House would report to his mother that her son was crying. Everything he did was watched and reported. He knew it was all for his own good and he knew Amma loved him, but sometimes, he wanted things to be.

He closed his finger around the Amulet, and pulled the chain so hard, it snapped. Mani threw the Amulet into the Trash, and ignoring its shouting, ran out of the apartment.

Mani didn’t know how long he ran or where he went or how exactly he got lost.







Without the Amulet to guide him, he simply didn’t know where he was going. But the smart objects of the City had guessed he was lost and alerted the proper authorities.

After his mother had thanked the nice policeman who brought him back, Mani took the Amulet from her. He was ashamed but also really glad to be back.

“I have adjusted some of the settings,” said his mother. “The House will now give you a little more privacy. But it is really for your own good, Mani.”
“I know,” mumbled Mani.

“So how was it, your little adventure?”

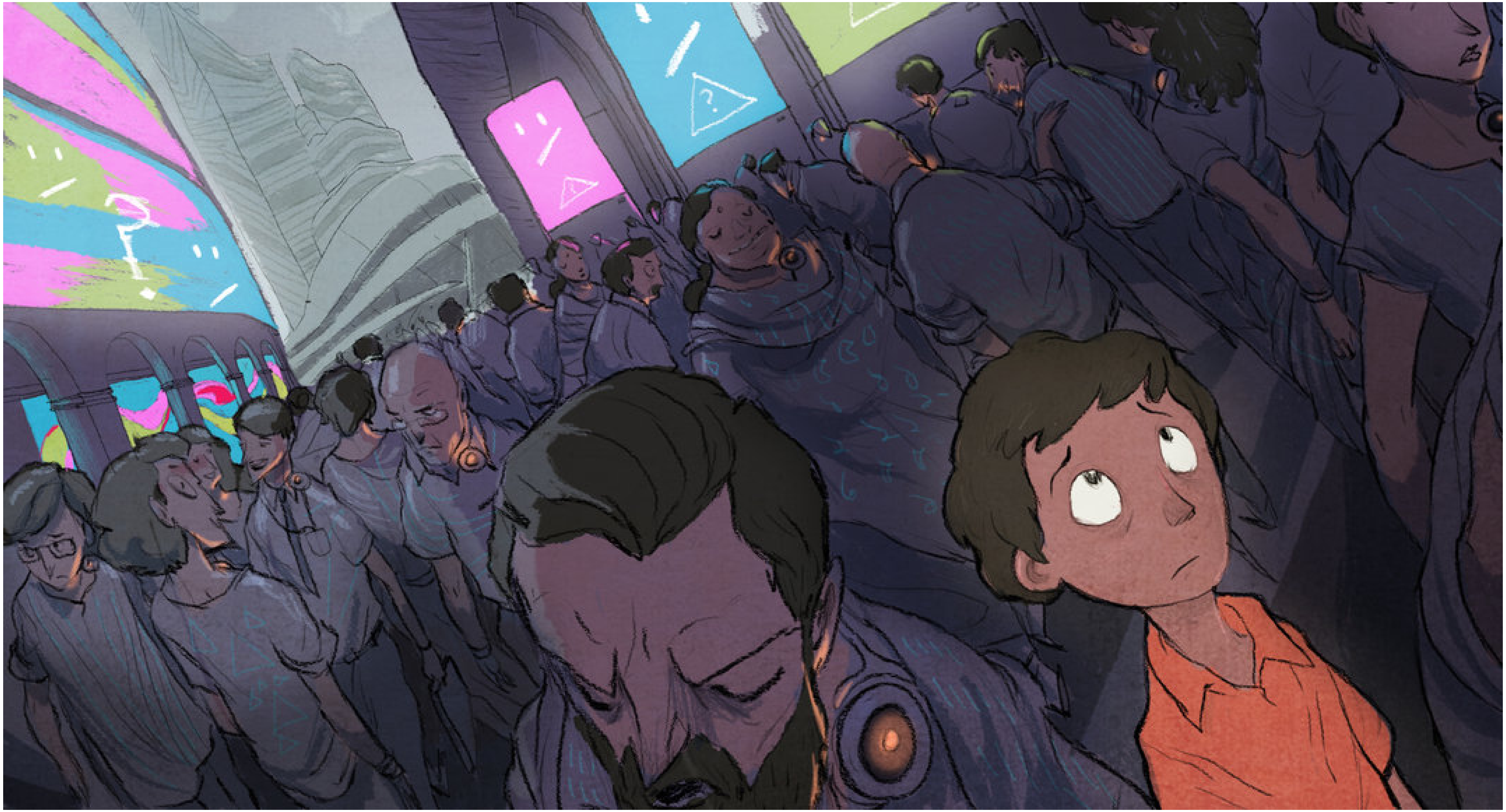
Mani shuddered. The streets had been filled with people but they were all somehow different. They were all … strangers. With the Amulet, the streets were filled with many people he almost knew. Their names, the kind of music they liked, who their friends were, lots of fun stuff like that.



Without the Amulet even simple things, like crossing the streets, had become difficult. There was no voice to tell him: “You can cross now, Manikantan.” And nobody knew him either.

When he had passed the poster for the movie 'Mission Maut', the hero of the movie Vikram Seven said: “Hi, do you like action movies?”

If he’d had the Amulet, Vikram would have said: “Hey Manikantan, nice to see you again, yaar, let’s talk.”



Without the Amulet, every object was as stupid as a stone.

“I thought so,” said his mother, with a small smile. “Now Mani, you know you shouldn’t have left the House without the Amulet? We were so worried!”

“I’m sorry I broke the rules, Amma.”

“That’s not always a bad thing, *kanna.* But you are a big boy now. You have to be more mature. Our life here is pretty happy, *na*?”

Mani thought of Anandpuram. An Amulet would be pretty useless in Anandapuram. Maybe that wasn’t such a good thing. He nodded.

His mother was very sweet. She prepared dinner by hand — well, mostly by hand, the FoodGenie helped, just a little.







Then she read him a story as he drank his milk. Later she tucked him into bed, gave him a good-night kiss, and touched her Amulet to his. He could tell Amma was very tired.

“Good night, Amma.”

“Good night, *kanna*.”



“Good night, Manikantan, good night, Amma,” whispered the House. “Sleep tight, and I won’t let the bedbugs bite.”

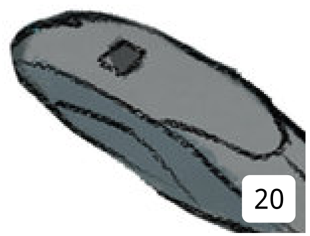
The Internet of Things

Does your alarm clock know that you have exams tomorrow? Will it remind you to set the alarm so that you can get up early to do a final revision? If you are going somewhere and get lost, can your shoes give step-by-step directions? Of course not.

Today, most of the objects we are surrounded are just objects. They don’t really know anything about you or the objects in the house. The clock is just a clock. The radio is just a radio. The clock does not know what the radio does and vice versa. They are not connected to you or to other people or to the objects in the world.

But things are about to change. Soon, all human-made objects will be interconnected. They will be more aware of what is going on around them. They will be smarter. They will be able to exchange data and keep track of your needs in a better way. When objects get interconnected and can communicate with each other, as if by an invisible telephone network, we say we have an *Internet of Things.*

If it were up to you, would you like to live in Smart City or in Anandpur? Why?





What if they all started talking?

Count the number of objects in your home or classroom (door, chair, clock, radio, books, etc.). Are you surprised by the number?

Imagine how it would be if they could all see and hear and speak. How would your life change?

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Manikantan Has Enough
(English)

Manikantan’s Amulet can tell when he’s happy or sad, sick or well. It can tell him when to eat and when to sleep, help with his homework and let Amma know if he’s not feeling well. Is it magic or is it science? Find out what happens when Manikantan and his mother move to the Smart City from their village.

This is a Level 4 book for children who can read fluently and with confidence.